Kanai-kun

Tanikawa Shuntarou **Matsumoto Taiyou**

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Tanikawa Shuntarou

Born in 1931. Poet. His works, such os "Morning Reloy," "2 Billion Light Yeors of Solitude," "Dolphin," "Listen Corefully," "To Live," hove been collected in countless numbers of books. He is olso the tronslotor of Leo Lionni's "Swimmy," the "Peonuts" series, fomous for Snoopy, ond "The Rhymes of Mother Goose," ond wrote the lyrics to the theme song of "Atom boy" ond "The Songs of the Doys of the Week." He hos been octively holding live performonces where he recites his poems.

Matsumoto Taiyou

Born in 1967. Mongoko. His work "Stroight" wos chosen os o recipient of the Four Seosons Aword for Monthly Afternoon in 1988. He mode his debut with the some work. Author of populor works such os "Hono Otoko," "Tekkon Kinkreet," "Ping Pong," "Gogo Monster," "Number Five," ond others. He won the Grond Prize for the Tezuko Osomu Culturol Prize for Mongo with "Tokemitsu Zomuroi." His most recent work is one thot is modeled ofter his own youth, "Sunny."

Illuminati-Manga

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Kanai-kun

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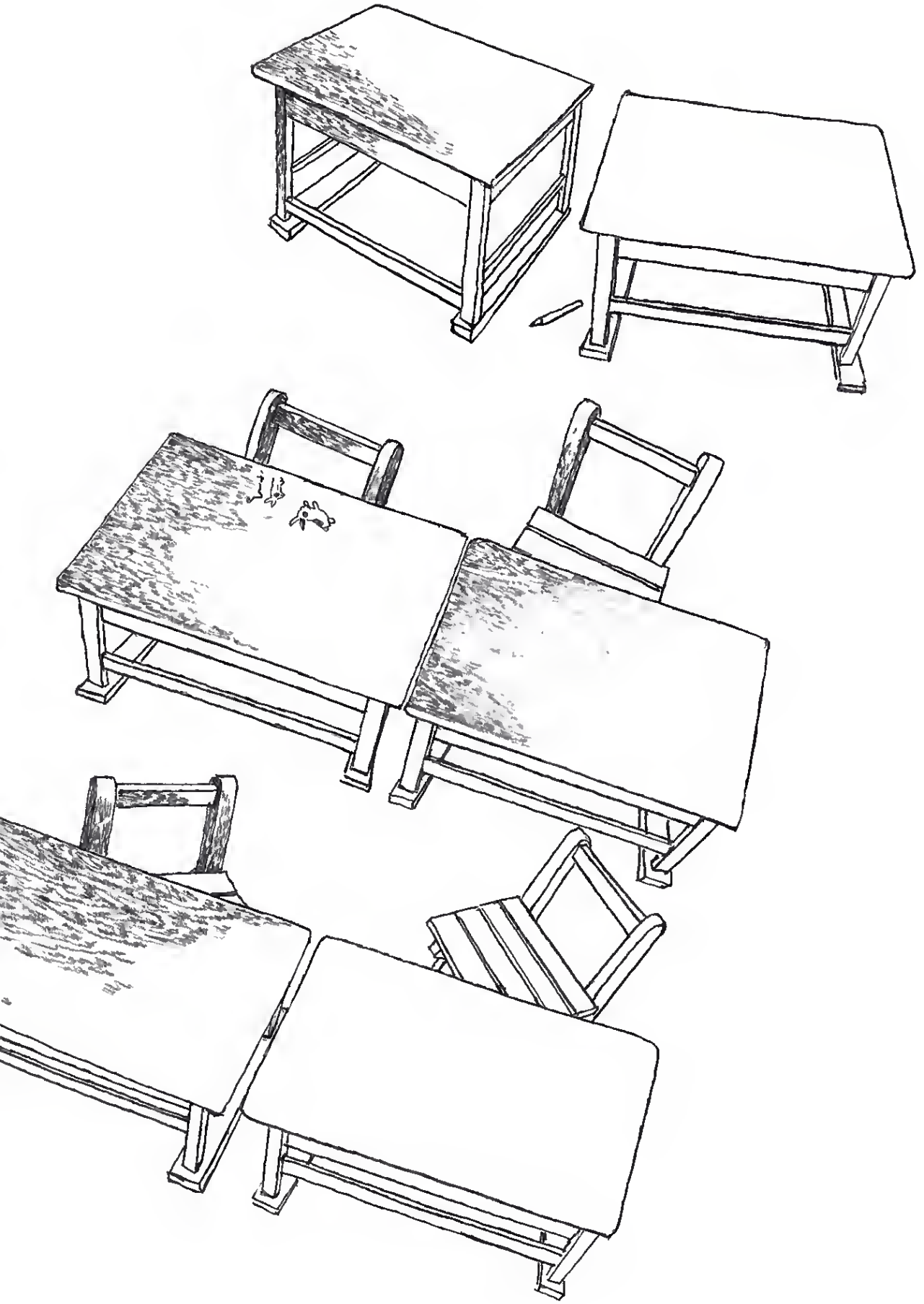
Matsumoto Taiyou (Illustrator)



Today,
Kanai-kun, who sits next to me, isn't here.

Today, Kanai-kun is absent again.

He hasn't been to class for a week already.
I guess he must be sick.

Kanai-kun’s not a close friend, he’s just a regular one.

They say that Kanai-kun is in the hospital.

The teacher said we should all
write him a get-well letter together.

The teacher who took our letter to him said
that Kanai-kun might not
come to school for a while.

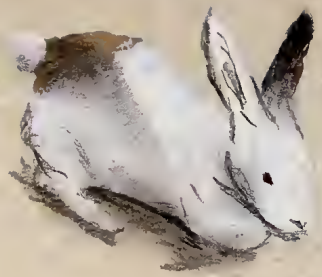
Michiko and Akiko were crying.
It seems like both of them like Kanai-kun.

I was surprised.
Today, the teacher said, in a different voice than usual,

“Kanai-kun has passed away.”

We all went to the funeral.

When the sutras began,
Osamu was gazing down,
his face completely red.
It looked to everyone
like he was trying not to laugh.



The new semester began,
and Matsuda-kun was now seated next to me.

The dinosaur that Kanai-kun made is still here.

And the pictures that Kanai-kun drew are still hanging up.

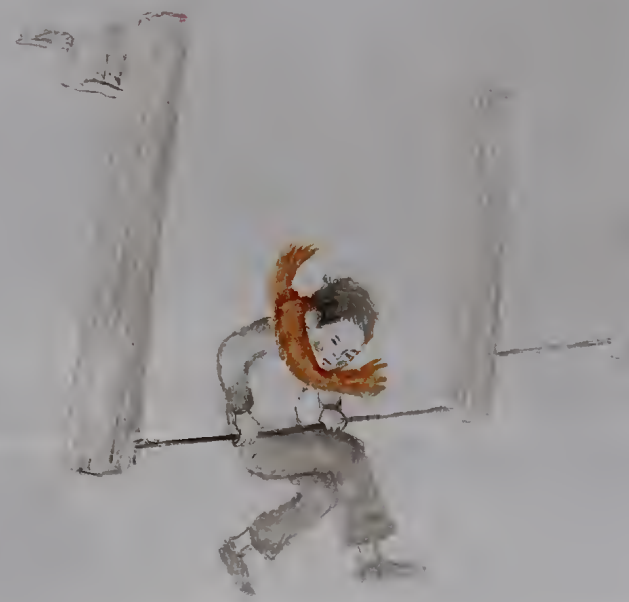
But now, Kanai-kun is only in photographs.

Does death just mean that
you're not here anymore?

Even though Kanai-kun is now gone,
everyone is the same as always.

Michiko and Akiko both look like
they're already forgetting about Kanai-kun.

While we're alive, everyone is friends,
but when we die, we're all alone.



"I've got up to this point finished, but that's all I have,"
my grandfather says as he shows me the sketches in the picture book.
My grandfather makes picture books.

"Was there really a Kanai-kun?" I ask.

"There really was, and he really died.
It was when I was in the fourth grade.
More than sixty years passed and I suddenly remembered.
That's why I started drawing this picture book."

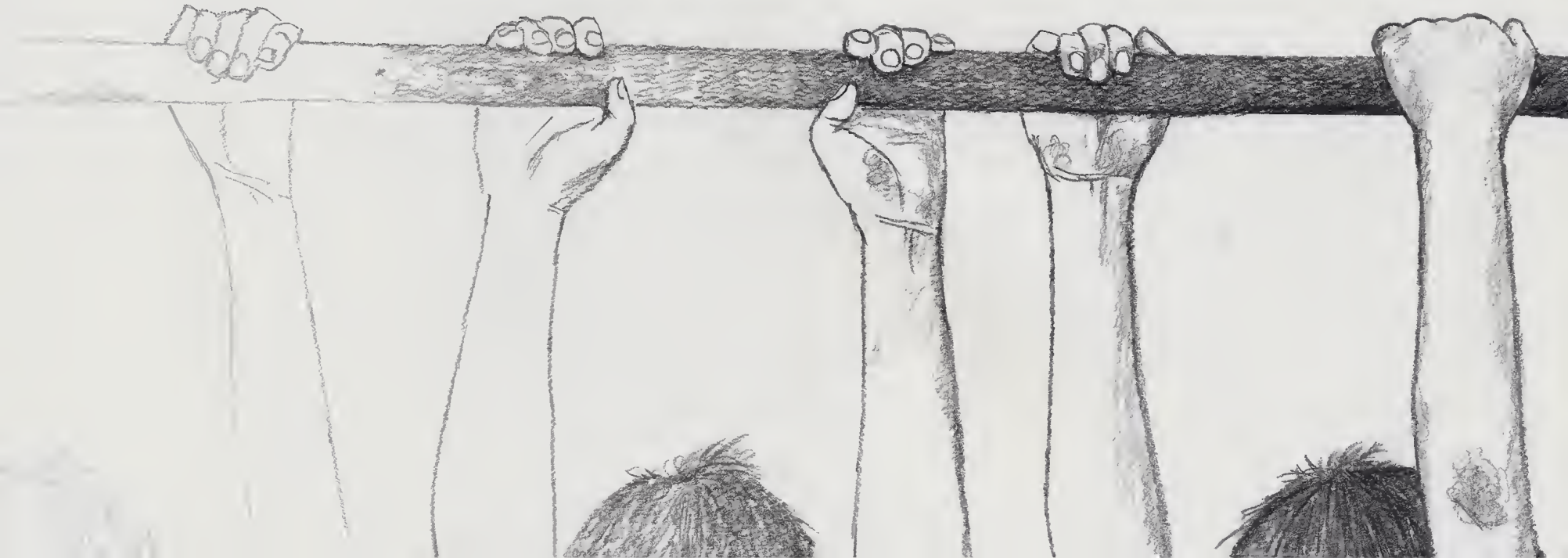
“So Kanai-kun was my grandfather’s classmate,” I thought.
Grandfather already knows that
he won’t be seeing the cherry blossoms next year.

“I don’t want to think so solemnly of death, but having said that,
I don’t want to think lightly of it either,”
grandfather says, as if he is talking to himself.
“I don’t know how I should end this picture book.”

"It's wonderful that there are still things
you don't understand and that you don't know,
even though you've lived for such a long time."
When I said this grandfather replied,
"That's true," and laughed.

Grandfather moved into a hospice.

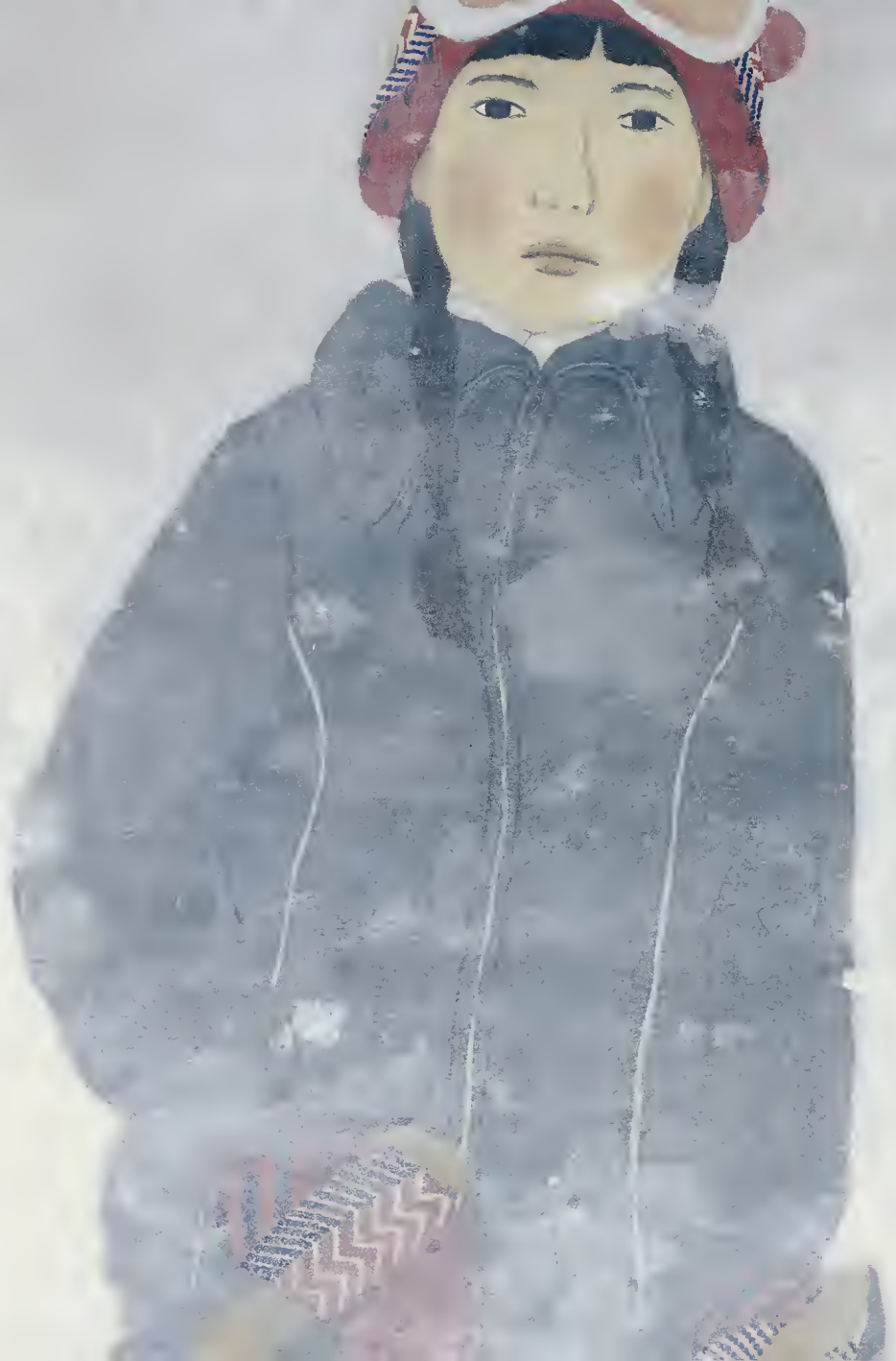
When I said, "But you haven't finished
the picture book about Kanai-kun,"
grandfather whispered into my ear,
"Once I die, I'll be able to draw the ending."



As I was riding the lift,
I got a message on my cellphone.

Grandfather died.

In the middle of this bright, completely white world,
I suddenly thought, “It’s started.”



I don't know what it was that started.
But I just thought, it wasn't an ending,
it was a beginning.

As I glided down the ski slopes,
I didn't even know whether
I was crying or laughing myself.